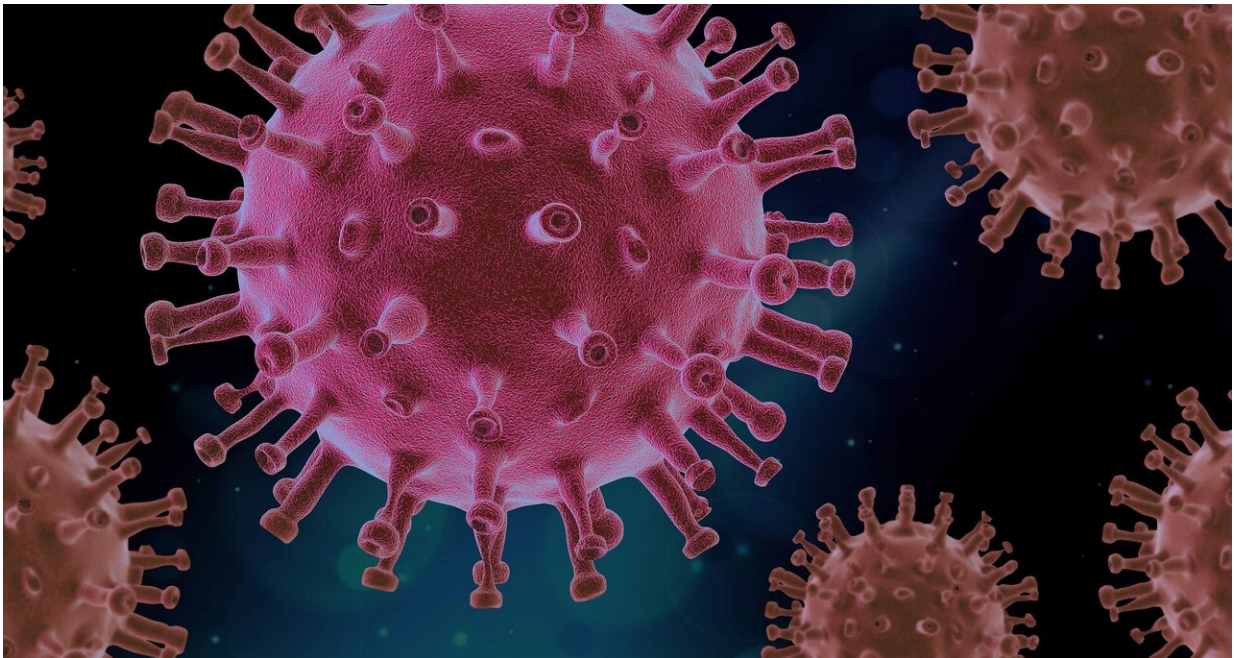# Q and A: Tips for coping with COVID-19 at home

January 27 2022, by Cynthia Weiss

Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: My sister tested positive for COVID-19 with an at-home test and has not been to her doctor because her symptoms are mild—just some congestion and a slight cough. Although the new omicron variant of COVID-19 seems less severe, does she need to seek medical care? How should she manage the infection at home?

ANSWER: You are correct that the new omicron variant of COVID-19 seems to be less severe for many people. Due to the nature of this variant and specific symptoms, if you or a loved one tests positive for COVID-19, it may not be necessary to seek medical care. Young, otherwise healthy people without other medical conditions who are experiencing mild symptoms can recover at home.

Most cases of COVID-19 resolve without needing any kind of prescription medication or advanced care. This is particularly true for those who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 and even more so for people who also have received their booster vaccination.

When it comes to at-home care for mild COVID-19 symptoms, people should focus on three simple things:

— Get rest.

— Stay well-hydrated.

— Possibly take over-the-counter medications for a fever.

It is also important that if you test positive, you must isolate at home for at least five days. Given the rapid transmission rates of omicron, no matter how mild your symptoms, you can still pass the infection onto others in the same household. If you need to leave your home after that, you should wear a tight-fitting mask anyplace you go for the next five days. That includes continuing to mask when around your household members. For a full 10 days, you should not go anyplace where you cannot remain masked at all times, like a restaurant.

It is important to monitor yourself to make sure mild symptoms don't progress into ones that may require medical attention. Symptoms that you should be mindful of include:

— Trouble breathing.

— Chest pain, or pressure in the chest.

— Getting confused or lightheaded, or feeling like you might pass out.

— You look pale or even bluish, especially your lips or fingertips, which can be a sign that you need more oxygen and need to seek medical care immediately.

Regardless of symptoms, certain populations of people will need to contact their [health care provider](#) if they test positive for COVID-19. That's because they may be eligible for prescription treatment.

You need to get in touch with your care team if you have [lung disease](#) or [heart disease](#); have [chronic kidney disease](#) and are on dialysis; have a compromised immune system; or take medications that suppress your [immune system](#), such as for cancer treatment, after a transplant or for treatment of an autoimmune disease.

If you took an at-[home test](#) and tested positive, your health care provider may not know you have COVID-19. You need to let your health care provider know as soon as possible about your results and your symptoms.

If you are eligible for a prescription treatment, such as monoclonal antibody therapy or antiviral medication, your health care provider would be able to arrange that for you.

Most people can just stay home and recover with these self-care tips.

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